DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 368 941 CE 066 265

AUTHOR	Braunstein, Jill; And Others
TITLE	What Do Unions Do for Women? Research-in-Brief.
INSTITUTION	Institute for Women's Policy Research, Washington, DC.
SPONS AGENCY	Women's Bureau (DOL), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	Mar 94
NOTE	4p.; For the full report, see ED 367 827.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adults; Educational Attainment; *Employed Women; *Salary Wage Differentials; Tenure; Union Members; *Unions

ABSTRACT

Although union membership has been declining overall, the number of women union members continues to increase. Currently, 37 percent of union membership are women. The proportion of women workers who are union members increased from 16.3 percent in 1965 to 19.3 percent in 1975 and fell to 14 percent in 1990; 7.4 million women were represented by unions in 1992. In contrast, the proportion of male workers in unions fell from 39 percent in 1965 to 22 percent in 1990; 11 million men were represented by unions in 1992. Unionization has increased in female-dominated professions such as teaching, nursing, and public sector occupations, as well as among better educated and higher-wage women. Women in unions are predominantly white collar workers in service industries and are more likely to be college graduates than men in unions. Union membership or coverage by a collective bargaining agreement is associated with higher wages for women. The union wage premium for minority women is about 45 percent. Unions increase wages more at the low end than at the high end of income distribution. The pay gap between male and female workers in a unionized work force is smaller than in a nonunionized work force. Unionized women earn 75 cents for every dollar earned by unionized men; nonunionized women earn 68 cents for every dollar earned by unionized men. Unionized women have twice as many years on the job as nonunion workers. Unions increase tenure more for low-wage women than for high-wage women. (SK)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED 368 941

Research-in-Brief

WHAT DO UNIONS DO FOR WOMEN?

At a time when union membership has been declining overall, a new report by IWPR, ***What Do Unions Do for Women***, shows that the number of women who are union members has continued to increase. As a result, women are currently 37 percent of organized labor's membership -- a higher percentage than at any time in the U.S. labor movement's history. Thus the face of unionism in the U.S. is changing, even though much of the research on unions continues to focus on men. IWPR research shows that union membership is important for women because membership or coverage under a collective bargaining agreement is associated with higher wages and longer job tenure, as well as a smaller pay gap between women and men.

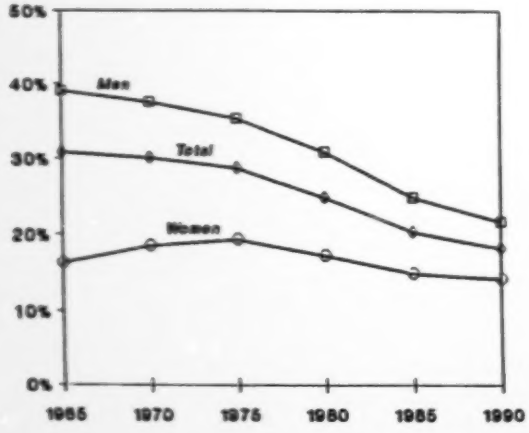
Trend in Union Membership

Overall, since 1980, both the absolute number of union workers and the proportion of the U.S. workforce that is unionized has fallen. Among women, however, union membership has nearly kept pace with the rapidly growing female labor force, and the absolute number of women union members has continued to grow. The proportion of women workers who are union members increased from 16.3 percent in 1965 to 19.3 percent in 1975 and then fell to 14 percent in 1990 (See *Figure 1*). Approximately 7.4 million women were union members or represented by unions in 1992.

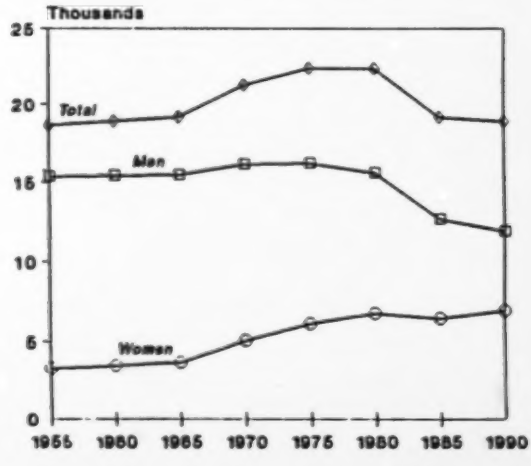
In contrast the proportion of male workers in unions fell from 39 percent in 1965 to 22 percent in 1990. About 11 million men had union representation in 1992.

Figure 1:
Trends in Union Membership, 1955-1990

A. Union Membership as a Percent of Female, Male and Total Workers



B. Union Membership By Year



INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN'S POLICY RESEARCH ♦ 1400 20TH STREET N.W. ♦ SUITE 104 ♦ WASHINGTON, D.C. ♦ 20036 ♦ (202) 785-5100

Who are the Union Women?

The number of union women is growing as unionization has shifted to areas such as teaching, nursing, and the public sector where women work in disproportionate numbers. IWPR's research also shows that unionization has increased among better educated and higher-wage women.

Industry and Occupation. While male union members are predominately blue collar workers in manufacturing, construction, and public utilities, women in unions are predominately white collar workers in service industries (see *Table 1*). Professional and technical workers are the largest single group of women union members.

Education. Among union members, women are more likely than men to be college educated, while me are more likely to be high school graduates (see *Table 1*).

This mapping illustrates the changing face of unions as women become a higher proportion of membership. It shows the movement of union membership from blue collar to white collar occupations, from manufacturing to professional specialty industries, and from high school to college-educated workers.

Table 1: Where are the Union Workers?
(Union Members Working at Least 7 Months)
1987

LOCATION	Women (in %)	Men (in %)
BY OCCUPATION	**100**	**100**
Administrative Support	27	9
Blue Collar	18	59
Professional/Technical	39	18
Sales	5	3
Service	11	11
BY INDUSTRY	**100 ***	**100**
Finance/Trade	8	10
Manufacturing	17	34
Mining/Construction	0	12
Public Administration	9	10
Public Utilities	12	18
Service	53	16
BY FIRM SIZE	**100**	**100**
Less than 25 Employees	3	6
Between 25 and 99 Employees	8	10
At least 100 Employees	89	84
BY EDUCATION LEVEL	**100**	**100**
Less than High School	12	17
High School Diploma	33	44
Some College	22	24
College or More	32	15

* May not add to 100 because of rounding.

Source: IWPR calculations based on the 1986 and 1987 panels of the Survey of Income and Program Participation.

Impacts of Unionization

Increased Wages. Union membership or coverage by a collective bargaining agreement is associated with higher wages for women. Unionized women earned an average of $2.50 more per hour than non-unionized women. This was equivalent to a union wage premium of 38 percent. When differences between unionized and non-unionized women workers, such as education, are taken into account, the union wage premium is 90 cents or about 12 percent (see *Figure 2*). This wage difference is reasonably certain to be due to unionization alone.

Relative Benefits for Women of Color. Unions benefit minority women, particularly African-Americans and Hispanics, at least as much as white women. The union wage premium, slightly more than the $2.50 gained by

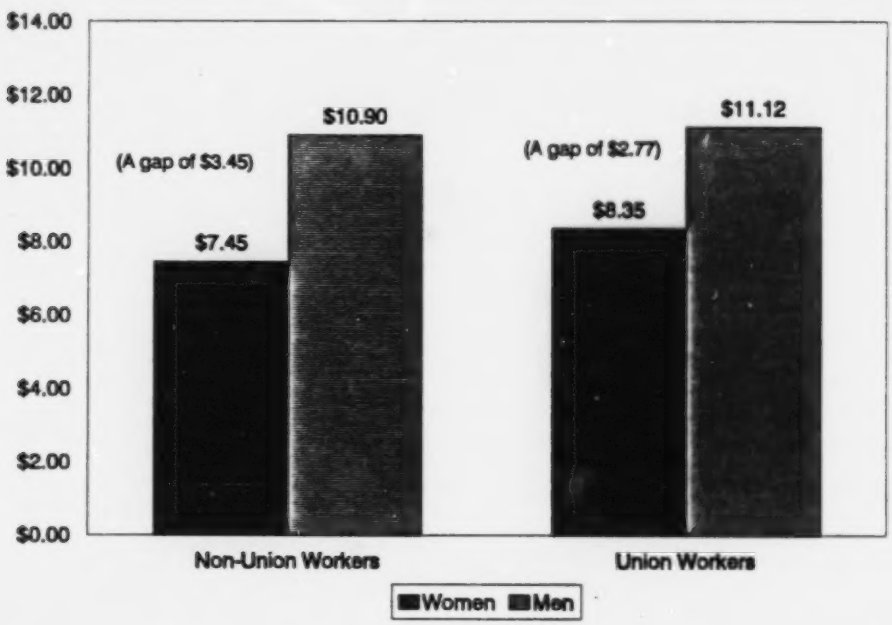
white women, represents a premium of about 45 percent for women of color. Controlling for all other factors, women of color who are unionized earn 87 cents or 13 percent more than non-unionized women. Although all workers benefit from union representation, unions increase wages more at the low end than at the high end of the income distribution.

Decreased Pay Gap. There is a smaller pay gap between male and female workers in a unionized workforce ($2.77 per hour) than in a non-unionized workforce ($3.45 per hour, see *Figure 2*). Unionized women earned 75 cents for every dollar earned by unionized men, while non-unionized women earned 68 cents for every dollar earned by unionized men.

Increased Job Tenure. Unionization is also associated with greater job tenure. Unionized women workers have twice as many years on the job as non-union workers. Among low-wage workers, union women have three more years of job tenure than non-union women. When the effect of union membership on years of job tenure is controlled statistically for differences in other factors that might affect tenure, unions increase job tenure by about one year or 20 percent, and increase tenure more (in percentage terms) for low-wage women workers than for high-wage women workers.

Labor law reform that increases women's ability to organize and to bargain collectively as well as increased voice for women within unions are necessary if the current 86 percent of women who are not organized or represented by collective bargaining agreements are to benefit from the increased wages, pay equity, and job security that unionization can bring.

Figure 2. What Unions Do For Sex Equity, 1987



The Institute for Women's Policy Research is an independent, nonprofit research institute dedicated to conducting and disseminating research that informs public policy debates affecting women. This fact sheet is based on the report, ***What Do Unions Do for Women?*** *by Roberta Spalter-Roth, Heidi Hartmann, and Nancy Collins, with the assistance of Jill Braunstein. The data are for the 1987 calendar year and are from the U.S. Bureau of the Census' Survey of Income and Program Participation. The full report is available from IWPR for $10.00 (less 20 percent discount for IWPR members). Mailed orders must be pre-paid. Mailed, faxed, or telephoned orders can be paid for with Visa or MasterCard. This project was funded by the Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor. Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent the official position or policy of the U.S. Department of Labor. This "Research-in-Brief" was prepared by Jill Braunstein, Lois Shaw, and Robin Dennis in March 1994.*